

A Charter School Proposal:
City Garden Montessori Charter School

St. Louis, Missouri
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Executive Summary

City Garden Montessori Charter School (CGMCS) will offer a unique, high-quality Montessori education to young children and their families living in the Forest Park Southeast, Botanical Heights and Shaw neighborhoods, as well as portions of the Tiffany and Southwest Garden neighborhoods in St. Louis, Missouri. Recruitment will be directed toward families within the following boundaries: Kingshighway to the West, Grand Boulevard to the East, Magnolia Avenue to the South and Missouri Highway 40/ Interstate 64 to the North.

The school's primary goal will be to ensure that each child masters essential skills in the core subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science and history/ geography, while integrating the arts, physical activity and community service into the curriculum. Situated in an area of St. Louis already rich in economic, racial and cultural diversity, the students of CGMCS will be encouraged to value differences among people both globally and locally; they will learn the habits of non-violent conflict resolution and sustainable living.

While redevelopment efforts in the targeted neighborhoods have accelerated in recent years, largely due to the efforts of an active, diverse population, improvements in the St. Louis Public Schools have not kept pace. Many parents have searched in vain for a school like the one we are proposing. They are looking for an elementary school that offers:

- **Personalized instruction** with low pupil-teacher ratios and a small school size which will promote a genuine, caring community.
- **Individualized instruction**, to allow children to learn at their own pace without damaging competition—the essence of the Montessori pedagogy.
- A culturally **diverse population** of students.
- A rigorous education accessible to all income levels as a **tuition-free** public school.
- A **moral environment** that encourages respect for human and natural ecosystems and prepares young people for leadership in the global community.

Time and again neighborhood leaders have watched as young families reluctantly abandon the communities they've settled in when their children approach kindergarten age. Many families do not feel confident sending their children to schools in the St. Louis Public School District; and yet, those with limited economic resources have very few other options. As a result, racial and economic segregation in our schools and neighborhoods continues; as poorer children are subject to mediocre educational experiences, the gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" in our city and our society widens. Whereas quality, stimulating schooling can enable children to realize their full potential, poor educational experiences perpetuate cycles of poverty, violence, joblessness and inequality. While several fine private and parochial schools are available in and near the City of St. Louis, most families are deterred by the expense or have different religious preferences. Further, a fully-embodied Montessori program of this type

has not been created within the public schools.

When fully-implemented, CGMCS will enroll children from kindergarten through sixth grade. However, our vision requires a gradual growth that allows the creation of a safe, respectful school culture. Thus we will begin with 50 children ages kindergarten through third grade and add an additional grade each year through 2011. Parent involvement will play a crucial role in the successful operation of the school. An independent Board of Directors will set policy and work to ensure the fiscal health of the school. Rigorous academic standards will be upheld, including pre- and post-testing of appropriate academic benchmarks. Thus we will be accountable to students, parents, the Board and, through our sponsoring institution, the state of Missouri.

Similar in some ways to Missouri's "Project Construct" approach, the Montessori core subjects of language arts, mathematics, science and history/geography come alive with a multiplicity of individualized, teacher-recreated, hands-on activities. Physical education, the arts, ecology, global citizenship (including introduction to a foreign language) and community service are easily integrated into the core subjects. Similar to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, Montessori techniques offer more than one way to teach each of the skills recommended in Missouri state educational standards. We are proud to be working towards opening our school during the year 2007; 2007 marks the 100th anniversary of the opening of Maria Montessori's first classroom in the slums of Rome.

To enhance the richness of the fully-embodied Montessori curriculum, we are excited about the educational possibilities at our doorstep in the nearby cultural institutions and natural beauty of Forest Park and Tower Grove Park. The children will be rooted in their urban community of neighbors and business owners and will enjoy accessing city services such as the St. Louis Public Library and Metro public transportation. The students at CGMCS will have many opportunities to serve their community, such as performing for the senior citizens at McCormack House or participating in neighborhood beautification efforts. A curriculum and school culture rooted in sustainability, nonviolence, acceptance and respect will help children develop the skills necessary for living a peaceful life in the 21st century.

CGMCS will hire a Director, faculty and staff who are firmly grounded in the Montessori philosophy of education. Parents will be attracted to our school because of a belief in our mission and because of shared goals and expectations, encouraged by frequent parent education gatherings. Parent involvement will be highly encouraged with a large variety of volunteer opportunities. A unity of purpose within our school will translate into the development of thoughtful, well-rounded children and the surpassing of academic standards. It will also lead to empowerment amongst the students and their families as they take ownership of the institution. Our hope is to demonstrate that, in the end, good schools build good neighborhoods and strong communities.

The Planning Committee for CGMCS recognizes the challenges we face in opening a charter school. However, the fierce determination of parents to find an innovative and

City Garden Montessori Charter School

high-quality education for their children cannot be underestimated.

The Planning Committee believes that all children should have the kind of education we envision for CGMCS. Rather than enrolling hundreds of children from a wide geographic area, we want our school to serve as a model for other neighborhood-based elementary schools. We welcome scrutiny and assistance from our sponsoring institution and all other interested professionals and St. Louis parents.

Mission Statement

The *mission* of City Garden Montessori Charter School is to provide a high-quality education to a diverse student population, following the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, and to cultivate young people who value and respect themselves, others, the environment and the world community.

Vision

In the process of nurturing our students to be competent, creative, lifelong learners who practice compassion, respect, nonviolence and sustainability, we will strengthen families, the neighborhoods we serve and the City of St. Louis as a whole.

Statement of Need

Background

City Garden Montessori School brings a wealth of experience to its efforts to create a charter school. Since 1994, it has been rooted in the same St. Louis neighborhood, primarily serving preschool children and families living in close proximity to the school. Almost since its inception, parents of City Garden students have expressed uncertainty and dissatisfaction with the elementary educational options for their children upon leaving its nurturing, academically-focused environment.

In June, 2007, the St. Louis Public School District lost its accreditation from the State of Missouri; the local elected Board was replaced by three individuals who have been appointed to serve for six years. This drastic step is indicative of the chaos that reaches into all levels of leadership in the St. Louis Public Schools. At the opening of school five of the last six years, a different Superintendent has been at the helm. This is one of the reasons that our city's schools have continued to show significantly lower academic achievement gains than any other district in the state. Parents in the City of St. Louis are distressed about their children's access to quality public education, and community members are concerned about the city's long-term viability when it cannot provide necessary educational services to its residents.

Having an unaccredited school district has caused some residents to leave the city, and others to choose private or parochial school alternatives. Many parents, however, do not have the resources to move to an accredited, high-achieving school district or to enroll their children in tuition-based schools. Other parents might have the resources to do so, but feel committed to living in the city and feel they deserve public school options that are reputable and adequately-equipped to educate their children. Some fine charter schools have led the way in offering quality public-school alternatives for families in the City of St. Louis; however, a great need still exists for additional charter schools to fill the void, more so than ever since the State's takeover of the district. In fact, charter school enrollment in St. Louis has increased 47.5% over the last three years, despite the fact that no new charter schools have opened and one large charter school actually closed its doors. Parent demand has compelled existing charters to expand grade levels and add additional campuses (Aaron North, Missouri Charter Public Schools Association, 2007¹).

Though large-scale efforts have been made to improve Adams and Sherman Elementary Schools, the public schools serving the area surrounding City Garden preschool, they have continued to struggle to show academic gains or other measures of success and stability. In 2006, only 17% of students at Adams were reported to score at a level of "Proficient or Advanced" in Communication Arts on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Test, and only 14% of students scored at a level of "Proficient or Advanced" in Math (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007²). The average scores for Missouri schools is 43% scoring at "Proficient or Advanced" in Communication Arts and 44% at "Proficient or Advanced" in Math.

Further, while both Adams and Sherman are situated in racially and economically diverse neighborhoods, both of them have student populations that are primarily African American and low-income (SLPS Annual Report, 2006³). In our outreach for the development of CGMCS, we have met parents of all backgrounds who are seeking schools that mirror our diverse community and offer a high-quality educational experience. They are dissatisfied with what they see in the totality of all options available to them: separate and unequal.

Parent Planning Committee

In January 2006, parents of City Garden students initiated an effort to address the dilemma of finding quality public education in the city. They were highly satisfied with the education their children had received in the preschool years and with the sense of community that they enjoyed there. A Parent Planning Committee (PPC) was formed to explore the possibility of establishing a charter elementary school that would build upon the strong foundation and the educational approach of CGMS's preschool in a fully public and inclusive model.

Parents and community members have been intimately involved in every step of the process in creating the vision, mission and plans for CGMCS. The PPC met monthly during the first year of the school planning, leading efforts to design the desired school culture, goals and purpose of the school, and to study what it will take to accomplish the daunting task of starting a charter school. In conjunction with the pre-existing Board of Directors of the preschool, the PPC served as the decision-making and planning body for the charter school until they handed over the majority of the responsibility to the expanded Board of Directors in January, 2007. Two members of the PPC joined the expanded Board of Directors. Other parents played a key role in recruiting additional community members with skills and expertise to further the growth and development of the school. The PPC continues to meet to provide input and assistance to the Board of Directors, which bears the legal responsibility for decision-making. As plans for the school continue to take shape, parents are being integrated as members of the Board's standing committees and the PPC will become the Parents Advisory Committee.

Targeted Geographical Area

The area in which City Garden preschool has operated is rich in both economic and racial diversity. According to a 2006 estimate by the St. Louis Department of Planning⁴, in the targeted land area approximately 60% of the population is African-American and approximately 40% is Caucasian, with about 60% of households earning below \$40,000.

In order to meet the need for an additional high-quality elementary school in the immediate area and to build a diverse, intimate and caring school community, the PPC recommended that our charter school strive to be a small, neighborhood-based school, targeting outreach to families in the immediate geographical area. Thus, the targeted land area has the following street boundaries: Kingshighway to the West, Grand Boulevard to

the East, Magnolia Avenue to the South and Missouri Highway 40/ Interstate 64 to the North.

Community Support

Because City Garden already has a positive reputation in the community, city and state officials, residents and leaders of cultural institutions such as the Missouri Botanical Gardens have expressed excitement that we are seeking to provide an additional educational option for families in the city.

Preparations for Developing an Elementary Charter School

In preparation for becoming a charter school, we have already begun the process of expanding our school and are operating a “pilot” kindergarten through 2nd grade class this school year. This expansion beyond our private preschool will allow us to develop and hone elementary curriculum, establish operational and administrative procedures, and begin to cultivate a unique and dynamic elementary school culture. This pilot program represents a significant financial investment on the part of the existing school, but we feel it will better allow us to serve students and families enrolling in the fully public program we plan to open in 2008. Further, it is a testament to the commitment of the parents to the establishment of our charter school; all of these families are enrolling their children despite the fact that their enrollment this year does not guarantee placement at CGMCS.

Grades and Ages of Students to Be Served

City Garden Montessori Charter School will ultimately serve grades kindergarten through six. We reserve the right to add preschool instruction should funding become available. We are planning for a maximum capacity of 175 students when fully operational.

CGMCS will open in September 2008 with 50 students in grades kindergarten through third. The students will be divided into two classes with a teacher and an additional instructor in each classroom. Due to the cumulative nature of the curriculum and the high expectations for self-discipline inherent in the Montessori approach, we will build our school culture by adding one grade level (and 25 students) each year. In the fall of 2009, fourth grade will be added. Each year after, another grade level will be added so that in the fall of 2011, the school will be complete with kindergarten through sixth grade.

This method of slow, steady growth will help us to create a culture of academic excellence that will be replicable elsewhere in St. Louis and other troubled urban communities. Our history in the targeted community connects us to the social service resources some of our children may need outside the classroom; as well, we will serve as a point of pride in the neighborhood for both residents and business owners who may be in a position to offer various types of support.

School Objectives

The following objectives outline City Garden Montessori Charter School's goals as a school and describe the type of learning environment and organizational structure that we intend to create:

1. CGMCS will show academic gains over the first three years of operation, particularly in communication arts and mathematics, and will thereafter maintain a high level of academic achievement.
2. CGMCS will implement the Montessori approach to learning as our educational framework to the fullest extent possible.
3. CGMCS will create and sustain a staff that is unified in its goals for student academics and behavior, communications with parents and professional accountability.
4. CGMCS will educate the "whole child," serving children's intellectual, physical, social and emotional needs.
5. CGMCS will value and promote diversity, global awareness and respect for all people.
6. CGMCS will be a strong, caring community of families and learners.
7. CGMCS will promote ecological awareness and environmental sustainability.
8. CGMCS will be a force for urban stability, being a resource to the community and connected to the community.
9. CGMCS will be effectively and responsibly managed and operated.
10. CGMCS will be a financially viable, fiscally-prudent, public institution.

These objectives, as well as the strategies to achieve the objectives and to assess the achievement of the objectives, are described in detail in the following sections of this document.

Academics

Academic Achievement Objectives and Plans to Assess Achievement

The parents, teachers and the Board of Directors of City Garden are so invested in developing a charter school because Missouri legislation provides us a unique opportunity to create a genuinely innovative center for learning. In the development of CGMCS, we have asked ourselves the question: What could be done to *really* ensure that all children are being served in a way that empowers each of them to reach his or her full potential, while at the same time building a lasting, positive future for our community?

Inspired by the work of Robert J. Marzano in his recent book, What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action⁵, we have strived to honestly address that question in developing the academic objectives for City Garden Montessori Charter School. Marzano looks at three keys for change: school-level factors, teacher-level factors and student-level factors. In our educational programs, we will strive to achieve maximum educational effectiveness and success, while offering a unique and innovative school structure and environment.

Pupil Performance Standards

Objective: City Garden Montessori Charter School will show academic gains over the first three years of operation, particularly in communication arts and mathematics, and will thereafter maintain a high level of academic achievement.

CGMCS will collect baseline data during the first year of operation and will collaborate with its sponsor to set goals in regards to the following *Specific Academic Objectives*:

- a) CGMCS will make reasonable and significant academic gains over the first three years of operation, particularly measured by the percentage of students who achieve a status of “proficient” or “advanced” in the areas of Math and Communication Arts on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test.
- b) In order to ensure consistency and continued academic progress, City Garden will do everything possible to achieve a low rate of student mobility, decreasing each year over the first three years.
- c) In order to have the maximum number of contact hours with students, City Garden students will maintain high daily attendance rates.

Strategies: In order to ensure that every child is making consistent academic gains, CGMCS will:

1. Develop a Customized Learning Plan (CLP) for every child that is monitored and updated by teachers each week.
2. Track academic progress and individual strengths and weaknesses of students via quarterly and yearly use of standardized assessment tools (both state-administered and Montessori-compatible).

3. Employ professional development training for teachers to integrate the Montessori approach with Missouri and MAP test subject matter. In particular, training will be provided to strengthen teachers' approaches in reading and math.
4. Based on early assessment results, institute programs for children who need supplemental instruction, particularly in reading and math.
5. Employ or contract a teacher with certification and training in special education who will assist children with special needs in making academic progress.

Academic Assessment

Assessment Strategies

Overall approach: CGMCS will longitudinally assess the progress, strengths and challenges of each individual child throughout his or her history at City Garden Montessori Charter School and beyond. For example, rather than basing progress on one fourth grade class's achievement by comparing it to the following fourth grade class's achievement, we will assess individualized achievement and progress made by particular cohorts of children. We intend to see academic progress as children continue their educational experience at City Garden, i.e., our first third grade class might only average 40% "Proficient or Advanced" in Communication Arts and Mathematics on the MAP test. However, as fourth graders, our goal might be that at least 50% of them score "Proficient or Advanced" in both areas; as fifth graders, our goal might be that at least 60% of them score "Proficient or Advanced" in both areas. As a small school, longitudinally assessing our students' progress especially makes sense as some years we may have less than 20 students in some grade levels.

During the first year of operation, teachers and the Director will conduct a qualitative assessment of the student population to determine base-line levels of academic readiness and achievement. Based on the initial assessment, CGMCS will work with Saint Louis University faculty throughout the first year of operation to establish appropriate objectives and anticipated outcomes regarding academic achievement in subsequent years. CGMCS will then use these objectives to evaluate its academic success on an annual basis.

An initial assessment of the student population and their needs will allow the faculty to provide maximum input into the instructional environment of the school and will provide them the opportunity to work collaboratively with Saint Louis University to determine specific achievement goals and benchmarks for CGMCS. Standards, approved by the Board and agreed upon with Saint Louis University, will be aligned with the school's curriculum and assessment tools to ensure the highest level of consistency and performance in the instructional environment.

An assessment plan will be developed that is mutually agreeable between CGMCS and Saint Louis University. We will utilize the following means to gauge academic performance and success:

1. **MAP Testing** - CGMCS will participate in the yearly MAP test with 3rd-6th graders.
2. **Internal standardized testing** – In order to monitor students’ strengths and challenges, CGMCS will develop a plan for regular internal standardized assessment, utilizing a standardized pre-test at the beginning of the year that is aligned with the MAP test that is given at the end of the year. We are currently researching the best possible assessment tools; two promising possibilities are the Northwest Evaluation Assessment (NWEA) and the Renaissance Learning tools.
3. **Customized Learning Plans** – City Garden teachers will create a Customized Learning Plan for each child, setting weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly goals, recording benchmarks that have been met and instituting academic plans to reach benchmarks that have not yet been met. Progress toward these individual benchmarks will be included as a primary means to assess achievement as CGMCS and Saint Louis University collaboratively develop school objectives and anticipated outcomes.

Educational Philosophy and Delivery of Educational Services

The Montessori Approach to Learning

Objective: City Garden Montessori Charter School will implement the Montessori approach to learning as our educational framework to the fullest extent possible.

Strategies: In order to implement the Montessori approach to the fullest extent possible, CGMCS will:

1. Recruit to hire teachers who have both Montessori training and elementary certification in the State of Missouri.
2. Establish a stimulating, high-quality learning environment with a complete set of scientifically-tested Montessori equipment and materials.
3. Provide professional development for both Montessori training and training that will enable teachers to achieve or renew certification in the State of Missouri.
4. Contract with a certified Montessori expert to fully align the Montessori curriculum with Missouri Show-Me Standards and Grade Level Expectations for all grade levels. CGMCS intends to have our Montessori curriculum for grades kindergarten through three fully aligned with Missouri Show-Me Standards and Grade Level Expectations by December, 2008. We will align the curriculum for grade four by September, 2009, grade five by September, 2010 and grade six by September, 2011.

Assessment Strategies

1. **Outside Evaluation** - Each year for the first three years, we will contract a Montessori educator (i.e., a Director or Principal from another Montessori public school) to do an on-site evaluation of our implementation of the Montessori approach to learning. Based on their recommendations, we will adjust our original plans for the Montessori classroom environment, targeted teacher training and overall school organization. After the first three years, we will utilize a professional evaluator bi-annually.

2. Internal Evaluation - The Director will perform regular teacher evaluations (at least one per semester) that consist of classroom observations, review of curriculum, teaching methods and children's Customized Learning Plans. He/She will use an instrument combining recommendations from the outside Montessori evaluator with some of the criteria developed by Marzano for classroom observations.

Why a Montessori Curriculum?

For several decades, Americans have been concerned that public education, the bedrock institution of our democracy, may be failing many of our children, especially those most in need. Many solutions have been tried over the years, with varying results, as detailed in Richard J. Marzano's review of 35 years of school reform, What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action (2003, op. cit.) Meanwhile, all over the world, as they have for 100 years, teachers and their students have been using and refining a pedagogy that continues to offer effective, adaptable strategies for addressing our failing schools: the Montessori Method.

The Board of Directors and the Parent Planning Committee for City Garden Montessori Charter School feel strongly that the philosophy and curriculum known as the Montessori Method offers unique advantages for addressing the serious problems of academic achievement evident in today's urban schools, particularly here in the heart of St. Louis, Missouri. As we describe more fully below, this pedagogy offers flexibility, individualized instruction, development of critical thinking skills, internally-motivated learning (self-discipline and delayed gratification), responsibility to oneself and others, and a fact-based global understanding that is needed for survival in the twenty-first century. Uniquely among the educational pioneers of the last century, Dr. Maria Montessori left her successor-teachers:

- a philosophy of education,
- a pedagogy derived from that philosophy and
- a collection of scientifically-designed learning equipment with which to teach.

Where often the principal at a traditional school must forge consensus among faculty to create a unified school culture, the Montessori-trained teacher arrives at a new school ready to implement curriculum and work collaboratively with colleagues. Students moving from one level to the next also benefit from this unity of purpose, avoiding adjustment periods.

Dr. Montessori based her educational program on what she called scientific pedagogy. By this she meant that practitioners of her method ought to be astute observers of the learning process of their students. As she developed the methods and materials that are used successfully today around the globe, she was continually experimenting to see what was effective at educating the children, and what needed to be modified or ejected from the classroom. Grounded in the genius of Dr. Montessori's curriculum, adaptations and improvements on her work continue to this day.

With 100 years of observation and use, research continues to show the efficacy of Montessori techniques with all children. In her recent book, Montessori, the Science behind the Genius, Angeline S. Lillard⁶ offers a psychologist's view of the foundational principles of Montessori technique and surveys psychiatric studies that under gird the assumptions that guide today's Montessori teachers. Her review of the psychological literature clearly substantiates the efficacy of eight key principles of education embodied in the Montessori approach:

1. "Movement and cognition are closely entwined, and movement can enhance thinking and learning.
2. Learning and well-being are improved when people have a sense of control over their lives.
3. People learn better when they are interested in what they are learning.
4. Tying extrinsic rewards to an activity, like money for reading or high grades for tests, negatively impacts motivation to engage in that activity when the reward is withdrawn.
5. Collaborative arrangements can be very conducive to learning.
6. Learning situated in meaningful contexts is often deeper and richer than learning in abstract contexts.
7. Particular forms of adult interaction are associated with more optimal child outcomes.
8. Order in the environment is beneficial to children."

CGMCS intends to continue in that tradition of scientifically-based pedagogy, by frequent individual observations of our students and more formal, yet flexible, assessment instruments. In addition, we will utilize other research-based learning programs when we find it necessary to supplement the Montessori curriculum.

Specifically, the Montessori framework offers a challenging and thorough academic preparation coupled with attention to the physical, social and emotional development of each student. Similar to the constructivist model (known here in Missouri as Project Construct), the Montessori Method provides opportunities for children to learn using a multiplicity of hands-on activities, which are skillfully designed to be self-correcting. These activities, known as the "Montessori Materials," are engaging, attractive and carefully sequenced. After each activity is introduced by the teacher, these learning tools can be practiced by a child alone or with a group of fellow students. They can be used as often as necessary until mastery is achieved. To teach multiplication facts, for example, there are many different activities always available for use, from traditional worksheets, to manipulatives (i.e., the Multiplication Bead Board) to an audiotape of the facts set to music. Thus learning stays fresh, active and engaging. In the last decade, Montessori's insight that teachers need to appeal to children who have different learning modalities has been thoroughly explored by Dr. Howard Gardner in Multiple Intelligences (Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intellegences⁷).

Subject Matter Content of the Montessori Approach to Learning

Please note: Children who enter the Montessori class at age five are considered “Primary,” or “First Plane of Development,” students. They are best served in a slightly different environment than that which is designed for six- to twelve-year-olds, who are considered “Elementary,” or Second Plane of Development,” students. Montessori’s vision emphasized the importance of the three- to six-year-old primary classroom. Thus, until pre-kindergarten funding becomes available, we will support various-aged children however needed and however possible to help them enter and assimilate to the Montessori environment.

Primary, or First Plane of Development

The Montessori classroom is a “living room” for children. Children choose their work from among self-correcting materials displayed on open shelves, and they work in specific work areas. Over a period of time, the children develop into a “normalized community,” working with high concentration and few interruptions. Normalization is the process whereby a child moves from being undisciplined to self-disciplined, from disordered to ordered, from distracted to focused, through work in the environment. The process occurs through repeated work with materials that captivate the child's attention. For some children this inner change may take place quite suddenly, leading to deep concentration. The individualized approach of Montessori is so conducive to learning because it capitalizes on each child's interests and optimizes motivation. In the primary Montessori classroom, academic competency is a means to an end, and the manipulatives are viewed as “materials for development.”

In the early, or primary, years the Montessori prepared environment consists of five distinct areas:

Practical life enhances the development of hand-eye coordination, gross motor, control, and cognitive order through care of self, care of the environment, development of social relations, and coordination of physical movement.

The *sensorial area* enables the child to order, classify, and describe sensory impressions in relation to length, width, temperature, mass, color, etc.

Mathematics makes use of manipulative materials to enable the child to internalize concepts of number, symbol, sequence, operations, and memorizations of basic facts.

Language arts include oral language development, written expression, reading, the study of grammar, creative dramatics, and children's literature. Basic skills in writing and reading are developed through the use of sandpaper letters, alphabet cut-outs, and various presentations, allowing children to link sounds and letter symbols effortlessly and to express their thoughts through writing.

Cultural activities expose the child to basics in geography, history, life sciences, and earth sciences. Music, art, and movement education are part of the integrated cultural curriculum.

The early learning environment unifies the social, physical, and intellectual functioning of the child. Its important function is to provide children with an early and general foundation that includes a positive attitude toward school, inner security and a sense of order, pride in the physical environment, abiding curiosity, a habit of concentration, habits of initiative and persistence, the ability to make decisions, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility to other members of the class, school, and community. This foundation enables them to acquire more specialized knowledge and skills throughout their school career.

The underlying theme and primary goal of all we do in the classroom is respect: for the environment, both specifically and generally, and for each other—among the children, among the adults, and between children and adults.

Elementary, or Second Plane of Development

As children progress in the Montessori environment, the materials continue to be a means to an end. They are intended to evoke imagination, to aid abstraction, to generate a world view about the human task and purpose. The child works within a philosophical system, asking questions about the origins of the universe, the nature of life, people and their differences, and so on. On a factual basis, interdisciplinary studies combine geological, biological, and anthropological science in the study of natural history and world ecology.

The Montessori environment for children ages six to twelve reflects a new stage of development and offers the following:

- Integration of the arts, sciences, geography, history, and language, evoking the natural imagination and abstraction of the elementary child.
- Presentation of knowledge as part of a large-scale narrative revealing the origins of the earth, life, human communities, and modern history, always in the context of the wholeness of life. Presentations of the formal scientific language of zoology, botany, anthropology, geography, geology, etc., expose the child to accurate, organized information and respect the child's intelligence and interests.
- Connective narratives providing an inspiring overview as the organizing, integrating “Great Lessons.” Great Lessons span the history of the universe from the big bang theory of the origin of the solar system, earth, and life forms to the emergence of human cultures and the rise of civilization.
- Aided by impressionistic charts and time lines, the child's study of detail in reference to the Great Lessons leads to awe and respect for the totality of knowledge.
- The use of time lines, pictures, charts, and other visual aids providing a linguistic and visual overview of the first principles of each discipline.

- A mathematics curriculum presented with concrete materials simultaneously revealing arithmetic, geometric, and algebraic correlations. This curriculum recognizes the child's need for experience, for repetition, for various levels of concreteness, for going from concrete to symbol to abstraction. The emphasis is on making formulas and rules a point of arrival and discovery, not a point of departure.
- A language arts curriculum emphasizing creative writing, expository writing, interpretive reading of literature, research, grammar and sentence analysis, spelling based on etymology and usage, and oral expression for sharing research, creative writing, and dramatic productions.

A Typical Day at CGMCS

What will a typical day look like at City Garden Montessori Charter School? If a child arrives at 8 a.m., he or she will be served a simple nutritious breakfast (for example, milk and cereal, provided in-house) before classes begin. At 8:30 the children go to their classrooms to begin working. They know that the morning is especially focused on mathematics and language arts. Their teachers have developed Customized Learning Plans (CLP's) for each of them, so they know what is expected from them. Some may pick up a project where they left off the previous day; others may consult a posted to-do list to learn what their next activity should be. One or both of the instructors will be conferring individually with students to direct them to appropriate tasks, which are noted by the students in work journals. Older students may be helping younger peers with a concept they have mastered. During the morning children will be asked to join small group lessons based on their CLP's; written follow-up activities to these lessons will be completed on their own. Often when one teacher is with a group, the other will be circulating to keep children on track. There may be a meeting of the whole class for a large group presentation of content or discussion of "class business" from planning an upcoming field trip to problems with classroom behavior. Teachers will be especially alert to the children who are working below level; these children will receive the extra attention they need to make accelerated progress.

The children's morning cycle of work will generally last for three hours (900 minutes a week in the core areas of math and language) before a break for clean-up, lunch and time outdoors. After lunch a quiet time will regularly include Sustained Silent Reading. Afternoon activities will include the physical and biological sciences, geography and history, music and art, and Spanish. Special effort will be made to reinforce math and language skills even while the children are studying these other subjects.

A sample schedule for a typical week at CGMCS can be found in the Appendix.

The fully-implemented Montessori classroom contains a three-year span of educational materials. This makes all areas of the curriculum accessible to children working at all levels. A child who is working below level can work with activities perfectly suited to his/her needs without a "remedial" stigma. As well, an advanced learner can move forward as soon mastery is achieved. Additionally, the three-year span provides

opportunities for peer teaching, which helps both the child who needs extra reinforcement and the peer teacher, reinforcing his/her own knowledge, acquiring leadership skills and learning the satisfaction of service to others.

Instructional Staff

Objective: City Garden Montessori Charter School will create and sustain a staff that is unified in its goals for student academics and behavior, communications with parents, and professional accountability.

Strategies: In order to ensure that CGMCS employs a staff that is unified in its goals for student academics and behavior, communications with parents, and professional accountability, we will:

1. Hire teachers who are both Missouri certified (at least 80% of the instructional staff) and Montessori-trained.
2. Intensively train teachers, both throughout the school year and, in particular, during an intensive two-week professional development period during the summer each of the first three years of implementation. Training will cover: curriculum alignment, assessment, Montessori approaches, effective instructional methods recommended by Marzano, use of Response to Intervention (RTI) with underperformers, discipline, school safety and other topics, according to the identified needs of CGMCS.
3. Schedule monthly faculty meetings for in-service training and problem solving.
4. Collaborate on frequent means of communication with the families, including parent-teacher conferences, newsletters, the CGMCS website, phone calls, email, home visits, etc.
5. Plan and participate in community-building family activities outside the regular school day.
6. Collaboratively utilizing the RTI approach, the teachers, the Director and the Family Support Coordinator will meet as needed to assess and plan for children who are not making adequate gains.
7. Offer teachers the opportunity to attend approved workshops, reporting back to the rest of the staff.
8. Work within a distributive leadership model, characterized by high levels of mutual trust and accountability, ultimately responsible to the Director and the Board.
9. Engage an outside Montessori educator to consult on teacher performance and overall school effectiveness. This will be done annually during the first three years of operation, and bi-annually thereafter.
10. Review teacher performance quarterly using an instrument that combines recommendations from the outside Montessori evaluator with some of the criteria developed by Marzano for classroom observations.

Assessment Strategies

The Director will be responsible for ensuring that teachers have the skills they need to help students learn. The Director will make periodic personnel reports to the Board, based in part on Marzano's suggested assessment tools. The Board is responsible for an annual evaluation of the Director's performance.

Instructional Staff Qualifications

As required by law, 80% or more of CGMCS teachers will have Missouri certification in addition to their Montessori certifications. The faculty will study the standards for each grade level they teach to be sure they understand how the MO Grade Level Expectations correspond to the lessons they developed during their Montessori training. Their dual certification will help to assure that their students will be able to apply what they learn in the Montessori environment to the traditional testing they will be exposed to as required under "No Child Left Behind." When we assert that Montessori is a scientifically-based curriculum, we mean that its teachers are trained to continually observe their students, to collect and analyze data regarding their progress and to discuss what they learn with their colleagues. Thus, faculty will meet regularly to share successes and failures and to continually refine the curricula that we create for each grade.

Student-Instructor Ratio

To ensure that all children are advancing toward proficiency, CGMCS has budgeted for each classroom to have one qualified teacher in addition to an assistant instructor, particularly during the morning. This will allow for an average ratio of thirteen children per instructor, particularly during the most intensive work periods for math and language arts.

Serving the "Whole Child"

Objective: City Garden Montessori Charter School will educate the "whole child," serving children's intellectual, physical, social and emotional needs.

In addition to sound academic preparation, many children and families have needs outside the traditional services of a public school that can create barriers to learning and success. City Garden Montessori School will partner with social service agencies and community resource groups to provide a range of services contributing to the well-being of both students and their families.

Strategies: We will meet the intellectual, physical, social and emotional needs of each child by:

1. Operating and maintaining a safe and orderly building that is conducive to learning.
2. Hiring a Family Support Coordinator who will interact with children and parents, offering guidance and support, and connecting them to needed social services.
3. Contracting with other agencies to offer health screenings, dental check-ups, speech therapy, counseling, and other health and social services at the school.

4. Implement school-wide use of the Response to Intervention approach for diagnosis and remediation for children not making adequate progress.
5. Acquire specialized equipment where necessary to help children with special needs to be successful learners.
6. Eliminating transportation barriers by a) encouraging carpooling and ride-sharing, b) implementing a secondary transportation system for students who are truant and c) creating a “miscellaneous fund,” over which the school’s Director will have discretion, that is intended to provide parents with cab fare, bus passes, or other transportation assistance to school functions, conferences, or volunteer opportunities.
7. Offering extensive parent education and support opportunities, and supporting continual communication between parents and teachers/ administrators.
8. Seeking professional development for teachers that will train them to a) identify and address particular social, emotional and health-related needs of students and b) to educate teachers about resources that will assist families with such needs.
9. Inviting social service groups that offer resources such as adult education, career training, housing assistance, etc., to provide programs at our school.

Ensuring Success for All Children, Serving Children with Special Needs

The neighborhood where City Garden is located is highly diverse, containing well-educated, middle and high-income families, as well as families who face all of the characteristics known to impact achievement: poverty, low parental educational levels, racial discrimination. We know that our ultimate success will be measured in how well we serve the most educationally-disadvantaged students. Early in the twentieth century, Dr. Montessori amazed her colleagues by developing a radically new methodology built upon the inner resilience of the so-called “defective” children who were her first students. Our entire school community is committed to keeping this legacy alive by keeping our focus on the most vulnerable of our children, those for whom success in school, as in life, is very much in doubt.

City Garden will employ a Family Support Coordinator who will work to eliminate any obstacles that stand in the way of a child’s academic success. This Coordinator, with the help of the rest of the staff and the Board, will be well aware of the community services that can be applied to the difficult situations our children may encounter, whether these hardships are material or psychological in nature.

In exploring the time-tested Montessori pedagogy, the Parent Planning Committee recognized that a Montessori education can accelerate the gifted learner while being encouraging and remediating for the at-risk child. In fact, Montessori techniques are often identical to the methods of the special educator; several of our current teachers hold degrees in both Special Education and Montessori. As in Montessori, special educators individualize their lessons, tailoring them to the child’s specific needs. They learn “task analysis” to break down a lesson into its minute components to find where the special-needs student is having difficulty. For the special educator, careful observation and record-keeping are essential. He or she recognizes the students’ need to learn with hands-

on, sensory-based materials that can be repeated often for mastery. The spirit in the special-needs classroom is one of cooperation, not competition. The skills used by the special educator are the essence of the Montessori approach to learning.

Over-arching Strategy: Response to Intervention (RTI)

One important strategy for City Garden will be use of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. RTI is a curriculum-based, observational process for assessing and assisting children who are not making adequate progress. RTI will be our first step when we notice a lag in a child's learning progress. As soon as a difficulty is suspected, teachers can begin collecting data to better-understand the source of the possible problem. They will follow a specific sequence of steps to discover the real source of any learning problems. Teachers at City Garden have been using RTI informally for years in our existing preschool. Ultimately, use of RTI will allow our learning team to recognize strengths and weaknesses, monitor progress, and finally, reach a diagnosis of specific learning disabilities in a child when necessary.

Addressing Specific Challenges to Success

City Garden's staff recognizes that several factors are often at work in low-achieving children. Among these are:

- **Material Poverty.** We will take a holistic approach to addressing the obstacles poverty puts in the way of our students' learning. If there are problems with the basic necessities of life, like food, clothing or shelter, our Family Support Coordinator will work to help the family to move from crisis mode into long-term solutions. (There are several social service agencies active in our area as well as a federally-qualified health center with dental care.) Communication among the entire staff will be strategic to supporting the child so that time in school is productive and stress-free.
- **Addiction.** Many children in our community have to contend with the effects of various serious addictions in their families. Knowing that the school environment is supremely safe and nurturing allows the child to lay down the burden of addiction at the door and enter into a world over which (particularly in the Montessori pedagogy) he/she has much control. The Family Support Coordinator, of course, will do what he/she can, and the Director will be prepared to administer "tough love" with the addicted individual in order to protect the child physically and emotionally. Professional or peer counseling or mentoring may also come into play as an additional support, and CGMCS will consult with outside agencies to implement appropriate and effective practices that will ensure ultimate safety for every child.
- **Emotional and physical abuse.** These issues may be difficult to detect and delicate to discuss with parents. However, if we notice a child who fails to achieve when he/she seems to have the capacity to do so, our staff will be trained to consider that abuse is a possibility. As required by law, teachers will report suspicions of abuse and neglect immediately via the state child abuse hot line. In the secure, encouraging, busy school culture with which we surround the children, there exists a safe haven dedicated to learning. Here, as with addiction, spending three years in the care of the same two-

teacher team can make a significant difference in gaining the confidence of both students and their parents. CGMCS will do everything in its power to protect children from abuse.

- **Truancy and the mobility rate.** Children have to be in school in order to be learning; CGMCS intends to have a high average daily attendance rate. We will implement a secondary transportation system to pick up children who are not able to get to school on a given day, usually due to family circumstances beyond the child's control. This service will be directed at children who are truant at the beginning of the school day; it will not be a regular bus service. The Family Support Coordinator will direct this effort, stepping up his/her efforts when occasional truancy becomes chronic. School mobility poses a particular challenge for the cumulative approach we take in the Montessori learning environment: each student who leaves is an irreparable loss to the learning community. For the child, changing schools, especially within the school year, is often traumatic, diminishing the child's learning and lowering test scores. Thus, we are doubly committed to retaining children in our program through sixth grade. As much as possible, the Family Support Coordinator will work with the family before they need to move, so that the cycle of the child's learning is preserved.

- **Behavior disorders.** The entire staff at City Garden will be trained in the techniques inspired by psychologist Rudolf Driekers (Children: The Challenge, updated in paperback⁸) as an overall framework for remediating non-productive behaviors in all students. A staff-wide approach to discipline will characterize our interactions with the children so that they know precisely what is expected of them. However, occasionally children will exhibit behaviors outside the normal range, which will require extraordinary measures to ameliorate. It is the first responsibility of the classroom teachers to create and enforce an environment conducive to learning; repeated disruption cannot be tolerated. In consultation with the classroom teachers, the Family Support Coordinator and the Director (see discussion of RTI earlier in this section) will serve as the first level of investigation for children exhibiting behavior disorders. For some, a behavioral contract or a temporary system of rewards may be useful; other measures can be developed based on the child's circumstances. From time to time there may be need for counseling services beyond those our staff is equipped to provide; CGMCS is prepared to contract out for such services as necessary.

- **Developmental delays.** The Montessori Method is often used as a model for the self-contained special education classroom. A special educator, either on staff or contracted, will have the expertise to observe and suggest approaches to the most common learning delays. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) will be developed and shared with parents as required by law. Additionally, Dr. Victoria McMullen, Associate Professor of Teacher Education at Webster University, has agreed to consult with our staff on the most productive approaches for children with more challenging disorders. As with behavioral issues, the Family Support Coordinator and the Director will work with the child's caretakers to optimize learning, and additional services will be enlisted so that the child reaches full potential.

- **Lack of parental involvement.** CGMCS is well aware of the role parents play in their children's success in school. We will offer numerous ways for parents to be regularly connected with their children's school. These include regular newsletters, internet-based communications, personal contacts with teachers, the Director and other staff, regular parent education events and relationships nurtured by the three-year age

span. As a community-based school, parents will be much more likely to be present at our facility on a daily basis than at a city-wide magnet or charter school. We know that some of the parents we will encounter will likely retain a dislike of school, rooted in their own negative experiences as children. For these parents, community-building activities involving food and fun are our chance to gain trust. Performances by the children are often a draw as well. For parents, especially single parents, occasionally offering them time away from their children on a weekend (for example, Parents' Night Out) might pay large dividends in building the kind of trust that would encourage them to be more involved in the education of their children.

As Dr. Montessori recommended 100 years ago, today's Montessorians are still looking carefully at the children they teach, evaluating progress daily by careful observation and frequent one-on-one contact with the children. Because the typical Montessori classroom contains a three-year age span, the teachers know each student and his/her family well. The experienced teacher notes the inherent characteristics in the child, which may be stumbling blocks to success; he/she notes as well the strengths and weaknesses in the child's family situation, which may call for special intervention and social services through our Family Support Coordinator. A Montessori education is both personalized and individualized: *personalized* because the child feels known and valued and *individualized* because the teachers have developed, using the CLP, a roadmap to help him/her advance toward full potential.

Compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

City Garden Montessori Charter School will ensure, per all state and federal requirements, that the needs of special education students will be met. In addition, any provisions contained herein are subject to state and federal requirements for students with disabilities. We reserve the right to contract with outside agencies when appropriate, to accommodate the needs of this population of students.

City Garden Montessori Charter School acknowledges the right of every child, regardless of ability level, to receive free and appropriate public education, and will not discriminate based on ability. CGMCS will comply with all regulatory special education requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and any other civil rights enforced by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR). Per federal law, all students with disabilities will be fully integrated into the programs of CGMCS, with the necessary materials, mandated services, and equipment to support their learning.

School Culture

In addition to providing an excellent academic program to all of its students, CGMCS aims to cultivate a unique school culture and to nurture children, families and the community in innovative ways that enhance our academic achievement; we believe that CGMCS's goals in these areas set us apart from other schools in our region.

We see a great need for schools that are integrally connected to the neighborhoods they serve and that educate children beyond traditional subject areas, incorporating values such as diversity, global awareness, community building, service to others and environmental sustainability. We hope to provide a haven for children to happily exist in the wonder and innocence of childhood while being exposed to a factual and respectful understanding of the world. This will produce well-educated citizens who are well-equipped to make a real difference in addressing the problems of the 21st Century.

Promoting Diversity, Global Awareness and Respect

Objective: City Garden Montessori Charter School will value and promote diversity, global awareness, and respect for all people.

City Garden Montessori Charter School's target neighborhoods are rich in racial and socioeconomic diversity; we believe it is important that our school reflect the diversity in our neighborhoods. Many of the schools in our city are racially and economically divided; children of color and children who are low-income are not receiving an education that is equal to their Caucasian and higher-income counterparts. We aim to be an active part of resolving this inequality. Further, we believe that in order for children to be successful in our global world and for our world to be an increasingly peaceful and safe place, children must learn to interact with, respect and appreciate people who are different from them. They must also learn about other people and places and various cultures' contributions to the global community.

Strategies: CGMCS will ensure that our school values and promotes diversity, global awareness, and respect for all people by:

1. Establishing a Diversity Committee, made up of parents, Board members and teachers, that will address the issue of diversity at our school.
2. Instituting an effective outreach and enrollment plan, that reaches families across racial and socioeconomic groups.
3. Adopting the "School Pledge of Nonviolence," which promotes respect, understanding and acceptance of all people and a nonviolent approach to conflict resolution. (A copy of the "School Pledge of Nonviolence" can be found in the Appendix.)
4. Implementing a multicultural curriculum in which each semester has a "continent focus:" literature, math, history, geography, art and music have themes relating to a particular continent throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, students have a feast with regional foods and put on a play that relates to the theme.
5. Offering a foreign language.
6. Implementing a service-learning component to the curriculum.
7. Providing teachers with professional development to gain skills in a) promoting respect, global awareness and nonviolent conflict resolution and b) effectively communicating with and relating to various populations of students and families.

Creating a Caring Community of Families and Learners

Objective: City Garden Montessori Charter School will be a strong, caring community of families and learners.

Maria Montessori believed that children learn best in the context of a caring, loving community. A school community is a powerful force in a child's life; when families and teachers know one another, children have an increased sense of belonging, ownership, empowerment and success. Building a strong community of families and children will also serve as a positive and stabilizing force within our neighborhoods.

Strategies: CGMCS will build a strong, caring community of families and learners by:

1. Promoting teacher-parent interaction via phone calls, e-mailing, occasional home visits and time before and after school when teachers are available to check in and converse with parents.
2. Establishing a Parent Advisory Committee that will oversee various aspects of school life, i.e. community building, special events, supplemental fundraising and grounds maintenance.
3. Encouraging each parent to do two or more volunteer hours per month at City Garden. Volunteer opportunities will include: chaperoning field trips, help in the classrooms, help with repairs and maintenance, office help, family outreach, gardening, coordinating and working at special events and fundraisers and sharing specialized skills.
4. Holding regular pot-luck dinners when families can come together casually and get to know one another.
5. Holding regular parent education events.
6. Hosting a "Cultural Feast and Show" once per semester, for all families to attend.
7. Planning periodic free and low-cost family outings, i.e., to the St. Louis Zoo, the Missouri Botanical Gardens, etc.

Promoting Ecological Awareness and Environmental Sustainability

Objective: City Garden Montessori Charter School will promote ecological awareness, love of the natural world and environmental sustainability.

We believe that the natural world offers unending opportunities for learning and growth for children, and that it benefits children's minds, bodies and spirits to be at home in the world of nature. Further, children are the future care-takers of our planet. Negative impacts on the earth are becoming more evident due to increasing pollution, land development and consumption of resources. In order for the earth to remain a healthy and viable place for all of its inhabitants, children must learn 1) to recognize human beings' role in the care for and destruction of the earth and 2) practices that will lead towards sustainability for the earth.

Strategies: CGMCS will promote ecological awareness and environmental sustainability by:

1. Making ecology and the natural world an integral part of the curriculum. Regular activities will include gardening, composting, recycling, care for small animals, nature walks and field trips to the nearby Missouri Botanical Gardens, Tower Grove Park, Forest Park and the St. Louis Zoo.
2. Implementing a “Sustainable Practices Plan” to minimize consumption of energy and resources.
3. Offering education and encouragement to families to “reduce, reuse, recycle.”
4. Instituting a “neighborhood preference” for our school. Enrolling families that live in close proximity to their school makes bicycling and walking a possibility and minimizes gas consumption.
5. Purchasing Montessori materials and equipment that will last for many years.
6. Exploring being housed in a “green” school facility.

Connecting to the Community

Objective: City Garden Montessori Charter School will be a force for urban stability, being connected to the community and acting as a resource to the community.

A quality school can be a stabilizing force within a community. Further, a school that is supported by and invested in the community has a higher chance of success. We envision a school that is a “center for learning” for the community, where people can come together for recreation, educational opportunities and community events.

Strategies: CGMCS will be a resource to the community and connected to the community by:

1. Establishing a small team of teachers and parents as a “Community Liaison Committee.”
2. Hosting periodic educational and recreational events for the community, i.e., guest speakers, ice creams socials, etc., and/ or participating in neighborhood festivals such as the Shaw Art Fair.
3. Developing relationships with community organizations by having school representatives attend events and meetings.
4. Performing service projects for members of and organizations in the community.
5. Inviting community organizations to hold programs on-site.
6. Being a welcoming presence in the neighborhoods being served.

Governance

Objective: CGMCS will be effectively and responsibly managed and operated.

Strategies: In order to ensure that it is effectively and responsibly managed and operated, CGMCS will do the following:

1. The Director of CGMCS (and certain Board members or staff) will attend professional development offerings relating to a) operating and managing charter schools and b) elementary Montessori education.
2. The Board of Directors (Board) will institute a review process for the school Director.
3. CGMCS' Board will participate in a Board Training and Development Day two times per year for the first three years of operation, and annually thereafter.
4. The Board will meet at least 10 times yearly and will maintain a quorum for all Board meetings.
5. A Board packet, containing the agenda and related documents and monthly financials will be distributed to the Board, the Director and Saint Louis University at least five days prior to each Board meeting.
6. The Board will comply with the Missouri Sunshine Law (relating to open meetings).
7. Board members shall serve for three years with two renewals possible. One-third of the positions will begin each year.
8. The Board will institute an orientation process for bringing on new members.
9. The Board will make every effort to maintain a balance of skills and expertise among members at all times (i.e. legal, accounting, fundraising, human resources, education, etc.).
10. The Board will strive to reflect the diverse character of the community it serves; it will schedule special listening sessions twice a year to hear concerns of parents and other members of the community.
11. The Board will maintain a "Board Binder" at all times which includes meetings minutes, board documents (bylaws, articles of incorporation, etc.) and financial statements.

Assessment Strategies:

The Executive Committee of City Garden's Board of Directors will work with our Sponsor, the Director and with Board Committees to ensure implementation of these strategies, conducting a full evaluation each year and publishing an Annual Report.

Organizational Structure

Nonprofit Status, LEA Status, Relationship with the Sponsor

City Garden Montessori School shall remain a Missouri non-profit corporation and shall operate within the regulations pursuant to section 355 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri (RSMo.).

City Garden Montessori School is a Missouri nonprofit corporation incorporated pursuant to chapter 355, RSMo. City Garden Montessori Charter School will be governed by the Board of Directors of City Garden Montessori School. The preschool operated under the same nonprofit corporation will be governed by the same Board of Directors, though it is a private nonprofit entity.

CGMCS will operate in the State of Missouri as a local education agency (LEA) consisting of one or more public charter schools in accordance with the Montessori educational model. CGMCS shall be considered a quasi-public governmental body and subject to the provisions of sections 610.010 to 610.035, RSMo. The board of CGMCS reserves the right to expand the original school by grade level or campus, with the approval of the sponsor. The charter shall constitute a contract between the sponsor, Saint Louis University, and the charter school, City Garden Montessori Charter School. No fee has been offered to Saint Louis University for consideration of the charter. Copies of the charter will be presented to St. Louis Public Schools and the State Board of Education.

Legal Exemptions and Statutory Compliance: Nonsectarian Structure, Compliance with State and Federal Laws, Open Meetings Law

CGMCS shall be exempt from all laws and rules relating to schools, governing boards and school districts with the exception of sections 160.400-160.420 RSMo. CGMCS shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices and all other aspects of its operations. The school shall comply with all state and federal laws pertaining to health, safety, civil rights and minimal educational standards. CGMCS shall abide by the state's open meetings law.

CGMCS shall make available for public inspection a copy of the charter, the most recent annual report card and results of background checks on board members. CGMCS acknowledges it may charge reasonable fees, not to exceed the rate specified in section 610.026, RSMo, for furnishing copies of these documents.

Members of the Board of Directors: Recruitment, Qualifications, Selection, Background Checks, Conflicts of Interest, Financial Disclosure, Liability, Removal, Terms, Duties, Meetings, Training

All current and future Board members will be screened by a criminal background check to be conducted by both the local police department and the FBI, and a child abuse registry check.

No CGMS board member shall be an employee of Saint Louis University. No member of the governing board of CGMS shall hold any office or employment from the board or the charter school while serving as a member, nor shall the member have any substantial interest, as defined in section 105.450, RSMo, in any entity employed by or contracting with the board. No board member shall be an employee of a company that provides substantial services to the charter school.

"Substantial interest" is defined in RSMo 105.450 as "ownership by the individual, the individual's spouse, or the individual's dependent children, whether singularly or collectively, directly or indirectly, of ten percent or more of any business entity, or of an interest having a value of ten thousand dollars or more, or the receipt by an individual, the individual's spouse or the individual's dependent children, whether singularly or collectively, of a salary, gratuity, or other compensation or remuneration of five thousand dollars, or more, per year from any individual, partnership, organization, or association within any calendar year."

All members of the governing board shall be considered decision-making public servants as defined in section 105.450, RSMo, for the purposes of the financial disclosure requirements contained in sections 105.483, 105.485, 105.487, and 105.489, RSMo.

The school board members shall be subject to the same liability for acts while in office as if they were regularly and duly elected members of school boards in any other public school district in this state. The governing board of a charter school may participate, to the same extent as a school board, in the Missouri public entity risk management fund in the manner provided under sections 537.700 to 537.756, RSMo. CGMCS will obtain competitive quotes from other insurers and compare these to the risk management fund in determining its choice of liability insurer. The chief financial officer of CGMCS shall maintain a surety bond in an amount determined by Saint Louis University and the CGMS Board to be adequate based on the cash flow of the school.

The City Garden Board of Directors shall conduct its meetings and operate in accordance with the Revised Statutes of Missouri.

The Board is made up of nine to fifteen individuals demonstrating a passion for the mission of City Garden Montessori School and possessing the abilities noted below. From these Directors, an Executive Committee consisting of a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary and treasurer will be selected as officers of the non-profit organization.

The Director of City Garden is responsible for reporting to the Board of Directors. He/She will not be a voting member of the Board.

The chairperson will act as the official representative of CGMCS to Saint Louis University, though the Director and other staff members will act as day-to-day liaisons with Saint Louis University.

The Secretary is responsible for producing minutes for the Board. He/She will also control Board communication outside of meetings.

The Treasurer will head the Finance committee and shall have a background in bookkeeping, accounting or another form of finance. This committee's membership may also include persons outside the Board of Directors.

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In addition to the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors will operate with three Standing Committees at the outset. These may appoint sub-committees or ad hoc committees as needed.

The *Finance Committee* will work with the Director to ensure the financial stability and accountability of the school. The Treasurer of the Board will chair this committee. As needed, there will be a Development sub-committee to supplement the public monies available to City Garden Montessori School.

The *Committee for Academics and School Operations* will be responsible for ensuring that students at City Garden receive the best overall education possible. Among the committee's responsibilities are: directing the alignment of Montessori curriculum to MO state standards, enhancing the physical environment of the school and reviewing school policies and procedures. This committee will be lead by the Director of the school and may be made up of members within and outside of the Board.

The *Committee for Community and Governmental Relations* will work to ensure that City Garden Montessori School is responsive to the needs of its community and the requirements of the State of Missouri as a publicly-funded school. This committee will be lead by another member of the Board and may be made up of members within and outside of the Board

The first term of one-third the original Directors shall be one year. The first term of the second third of the original Directors shall be two years. The first term of the final third of the original Directors shall be three years. After these initial terms, each term shall be for a three-year period. Any Director wishing to succeed him or herself may do so, with approval from the Board, for a total of three consecutive terms. Vacancies occurring on the Board of Directors, including vacancies due to an increase in the size of the Board, may be filled by a vote of the Directors then in office.

The Committee on Community and Government Relations shall be charged with recruiting and nominating candidates to be elected to the Board of Directors.

There shall be one slot on the Board of Directors designated for a CGMS parent and one slot designated for a resident of the target geographic area. Other members will be selected based on the expertise, time and resources they have to share with the CGMS community.

Before the start of the second term of Directorship, the Chairperson of the Board shall appoint a committee of three Board members to review recommendations for membership. The committee shall make its recommendation to the Board and election by the Board of Directors shall be by simple majority.

Recommendations for membership to the Board of Directors shall focus on all of the following abilities:

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- Time – the candidate shall have the time to devote to the business of the Board of Directors;
- Talent – the candidate shall possess the skills required for advancing the mission of City Garden Montessori Charter School; and
- Treasure – the candidate shall have a desire to seek out income sources to enhance City Garden’s mission.

Duties of the Board of Directors

The Directors are legally and morally responsible for all activities of City Garden. Board of Directors is solely responsible for determining school policy in the following areas:

Human Resources

Board members shall:

- Ensure a continuity of quality in board membership by recruiting new Directors, recognizing and nurturing one’s relationship with existing Board members and providing current Board members with opportunities to grow and develop as leaders. The Board of Directors shall perform an evaluation of the School Director annually.
- Ensure accountability of the School Director by being responsible for hiring and firing the Director and performing ongoing evaluations of him or her.
- Ensure a qualified and justly-compensated staff by guiding policy on salaries, benefits and grievance procedures.

Planning

The Board of Directors shall:

- Work within the school’s mission, philosophy and goals.
- Plan for the school’s future, on both a long- and short-term basis.
- Decide the type of services/programs that may be offered as an adjunct to the curriculum of City Garden
- Participate in the preparation, review and evaluation of City Garden’s programs and operations and shall jointly review the schools’ performance, management and operations with the charter school’s Sponsor. As appropriate, it shall also review the annual report, reports on teaching methods and educational innovations and data shared with the state of Missouri.

*In the area of **Finance** the Board will:*

- Ensure the financial accountability of the City Garden Montessori Charter School.
- Oversee an ongoing process of budget development, approval and review.
- Raise funds and or ensure adequate funds are raised to support City Garden’s policies and programs.
- Manage and maintain properties or investments City Garden may possess.

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*In the area of **Community Relations**, the Board will*

- Ensure that City Garden's programs and services appropriately address student and community needs.
- Coordinate the marketing and public relations for the school. Members of the Board of Directors are emissaries of the school within the community.

*In the area of **School Operations**, the Board will*

- Ensure that City Garden's administrative systems are adequate and appropriate.
- Ensure that the organization and legal structure are adequate and appropriate
- Ensure that the school and its Board members meet all applicable legal requirements.

Meetings of the Board and its Committees

The Board of Directors shall meet ten months out of each year. (For example, the Board might meet each month except for July and December.) The meetings will be at a regularly scheduled date and time, which shall be publicized as an open meeting in accordance with 610.010 to 610.030, RSMo. Committee meetings shall be arranged as necessary by each committee's membership. Special meetings shall be held as needed. Ad hoc committees shall be created as needed. Directors unable to attend a Board meeting shall notify the Chairperson, Vice-chair or Director of their upcoming absence. Board members who are absent from a meeting retain the responsibility to review the meeting agenda and minutes. The Secretary shall notify the Board and provide information for automatic review by the Board of Directors of any Director with three absences within a calendar year. The absentee member, without notice, may be dismissed by a simple majority vote of the Board.

Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws

Please see the Appendix for a copy of the City Garden Montessori School Articles of Incorporation, form NFP-102.10 and Bylaws.

School Operations

Daily Operations and Decisions

The Director

The Director of City Garden Montessori Charter School shall make the day-to-day decisions regarding operation of the school. In the event of the Director's absence, he or she shall delegate to one professional educator employed by City Garden the responsibility of daily operations and interaction with the Board of Directors as may be needed.

The Director shall oversee the goals, curriculum and philosophy of the City Garden Montessori Charter School and communicate the same to the educators, volunteers, parents and students.

The Director shall inform, advise and counsel the Board regarding important matters concerning the school.

The Director shall, with the cooperation and assistance of the Board of Directors and the Standing Committees, ensure that an annual report is completed and distributed as prescribed in section 160.522, RSMo.

The Director shall, with the cooperation and assistance of the Board of Directors, provide data as requested by the state of Missouri for the study of charter schools.

As stated above, the Director shall, with the cooperation and assistance of the Board of Directors and any special committee the Board may appoint, ensure that Saint Louis University and school jointly review the school's performance, management and operations at least once every year.

The Director shall oversee volunteer involvement. He or she will set policy regarding the scope and capacity of the volunteers' work, and how they will be screened, treated, recognized and celebrated.

Teachers

Teachers shall be aware of each child's needs in order to facilitate learning in a collaborative and innovative manner. According to the discretion of the Director, teachers shall be requested to offer input in an integrated decision-making process regarding various administrative issues including but not limited to curriculum assessment, student discipline, extracurricular activities and instructional resources.

City Garden Montessori Charter School shall

- conduct regularly-scheduled faculty meetings.

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- enlist the assistance of teachers to serve on one or more committees that may include the Director.
- offer to its teachers the opportunity to voluntarily participate in the Parent Advisory Committee and any other parent-teacher committees or organizations that are developed.
- provide in-house workshops and/or training to its teachers.
- enlist the assistance of teachers for special events and projects.

Entire Staff

The entire staff of City Garden Montessori Charter School shall be responsible for the emotional and physical safety and well being of each student.

Educators not Employed by the School

Educators from other cultural institutions will be involved with City Garden, for example, as aides, observers, tutors, consultants, etc., as may be appropriate. The Director/teachers shall orient educators not employed by City Garden to the school's methods and philosophy and those educators must respect its goals and curriculum while providing services at City Garden Montessori Charter School.

Connecting Home, School and the Community

Parent Involvement

A good school has a strong sense of community, where everyone is invested in the school and its success. Parent involvement will be essential to the success of City Garden Montessori Charter School.

Parents will be offered a variety of options for becoming involved in the school. The aim is for City Garden to be a school where each family "pitches in" to make everything come together. Thus, parents will be looked to for assistance with maintenance needs, school functions, field trips, transportation, etc. Parents will also be encouraged to help with fundraising to further enhance the mission of City Garden Montessori Charter School. A Parent Advisory Committee will facilitate the involvement of each family in the operation and enhancement of the school. In cooperation with the efforts of the Board of Directors, the Parent Advisory Committee shall develop subcommittees for special projects and activities as appropriate. Members of special committees appointed may or may not be the parent/guardian of a student at City Garden.

A Parent Planning Committee has met regularly since January 2006 to develop and make plans for City Garden Montessori Charter School; the members of this committee have been active on all fronts: establishing the vision, writing the Charter, recruiting, fund raising, publicizing and even painting and cleaning the new site for the school. As the Planning Committee becomes the Parent Advisory Committee, leadership roles will be formalized and they will be increasing, as well. Parents interested in participating in

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school governance may be a member on the Board of Directors (at least two slots will be reserved for parents), a member on one of the Board's standing committees or ad-hoc committees (created for temporary needs), attend Board meetings and review copies of Board and Committee minutes in the Board Binder.

CGMCS will also provide opportunities for parents and families to come together outside of the school day. Recognizing that parents are the first teachers of their children, City Garden will facilitate parent education opportunities, parent discussions and family events that help build a strong sense of community within the school.

City Garden will provide parents/guardians with a Family Handbook explaining the policies and procedures that make up the school routines, describing the goals the school has for their child's education and the role expected of them in their child's schooling. The discussion of parents' role includes their responsibility to see that the child is well-rested on a daily basis, and that he/she has a home environment conducive to learning.

City Garden Montessori Charter School will:

- provide regularly-scheduled parent/teacher conferences.
- encourage parents/guardians to facilitate extra-curricular activities such as tutoring, special interests and enrichment programs.
- encourage parents/guardians to volunteer time for fundraising, special projects, tutoring, etc.

Community Involvement

City Garden Montessori Charter School will emphasize the joy of city living and all of the resources available to residents of the City of St. Louis. City Garden will explore relationships with these and other cultural institutions in the St. Louis area:

- The St. Louis Public Library
- The Institute for Peace and Justice
- Forest Park, which shall provide an alternative playground and recreational facilities and an opportunity for special activities and experiential learning (through the Forest Park Voyagers project)
- St. Louis Science Center, which shall provide demonstration sites and experiential learning
- St. Louis Zoo
- Tower Grove Park, which shall provide an alternative playground and recreational facilities and an opportunity for special activities and experiential learning
- Missouri Botanical Gardens
- St. Louis Art Museum
- Missouri History Museum
- Museum of Transportation
- St. Louis Symphony Orchestra
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources

CGMCS will also work to be a resource for the surrounding community and will connect with various community organizations to best serve the school's children and families.

Sponsor's Involvement

The sponsor of City Garden Montessori Charter School shall be Saint Louis University.

Saint Louis University shall not be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school, but is encouraged to offer advice and assistance on both academic and non-academic matters. Saint Louis University will be invited to attend any and all CGMS Board meetings. As stated previously, CGMCS is a public school and must abide by the Sunshine Law and Open Meetings Act.

Within the restrictions of federal privacy laws, Saint Louis University will have open access to all school data, including student information and ongoing operations for the school.

Saint Louis University will receive copies of all reports and information CGMCS submits to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), including monthly reports regarding attendance and free and reduced lunch counts. Saint Louis University will also receive copies of the minutes from monthly board meetings.

Saint Louis University will be encouraged to make regular informal site visits, both announced and unannounced, throughout the course of the school year.

Saint Louis University shall provide timely submission to the State Board of Education of all data necessary to demonstrate that Saint Louis University is in material compliance with all requirements of sections 160.400 to 160.420 and 167.349, RSMo.

At least once every year, Saint Louis University, in conjunction with the staff of CGMCS, shall conduct a review of the school's performance, management and operation that will include: a structured site visit with members of Saint Louis University, an evaluation of the school's success and to what extent it is meeting its objectives and an evaluation of the sponsor-charter school relationship. Saint Louis University shall make available the school accountability report card information as provided under section 160.522, as well as the results of the academic monitoring required by statute.

Outside of the monitoring role, CGMCS welcomes additional partnerships with the university. Students and faculty from Saint Louis University will be welcome on site at CGMCS for student teaching, volunteer service, service-learning, classroom observation, practica, research, etc. In our efforts to better prepare students for classroom instruction, we are interested in including nonacademic assistance in the areas of health and human services. Saint Louis University will, in particular, assist CGMCS in maintaining the Montessori philosophy in its curriculum and practices. Saint Louis University will also assist in monitoring the demographics and the needs of the students at CGMCS.

CGMCS will recommend all teaching faculty needing state certification to consult with faculty at Saint Louis University regarding certification issues and requirements. Regardless of the school's recommendation, however, we must realize that individual staff members ultimately have the right to pursue certification and coursework through a provider of their own choosing.

City Garden Montessori Charter School looks forward to considering and implementing, as may be deemed appropriate by the Director, the ideas, advice and consultation offered by Saint Louis University. City Garden anticipates a coordinated and collaborative relationship with Saint Louis University for the benefit of the students of the school; however the typical operations shall be under the purview of the Director.

Saint Louis University shall take all reasonable steps necessary to confirm that CGMCS is in material compliance and remains in material compliance with all material provisions of the charter and sections 160.400 to 160.420 and 167.349, RSMo. The charter school shall provide all information necessary to confirm ongoing compliance with all provisions of its charter and sections 160.400 to 160.420 and 167.349, RSMo, in a timely manner to Saint Louis University.

Per statute, Saint Louis University is not liable for any acts or omissions relating to the charter submitted by the school, or the operation and performance of the school.

Student Enrollment

Recruitment, Admissions, Boundaries, Preferences, Equal Access, Methodology, Lottery, Wait List, Continued Enrollment, Filling Vacancies, Nondiscrimination

Concurrent with the approval of the charter by Saint Louis University, the school will initiate a systematic, methodical, documented recruitment process to ensure the school is not racially or socio-economically segregated. Students from the land area within the following street boundaries will be recruited and given enrollment preference:

Kingshighway to the West, Grand Boulevard to the East, Magnolia Avenue to the South and Missouri Highway 40/ Interstate 64 to the North. This encompasses the Shaw, Botanical Heights and Forest Park Southeast neighborhoods, as well as portions of the Southwest Garden and Tiffany neighborhoods (all are in the 63110 zip code). A map of the targeted geographical area can be found in the Appendix.

City Garden Montessori Charter School will enroll all students who respond by submitting timely applications. If the number of applications exceeds the capacity of the school, a lottery will be used to determine admission. Admission for the 2008-2009 school year will be limited to students in grades kindergarten through third; each year we will serve an additional grade level.

City Garden Montessori Charter School acknowledges its right, per statute, to give enrollment preference to siblings of students already attending or accepted to the school, children of parents employed by the school and to students living within the above

mentioned geographic boundaries. A child who moves from the designated service boundaries to another location in the City of St. Louis after attending City Garden for at least 3 months may be allowed to continue attending the school, as long as his or her attendance remains at 90% or higher.

In the event that the school is over-subscribed for any grade level and a waiting list must be created, openings within the school will be filled by drawing individuals at random from the waiting list. This methodology ensures that every student, including those selected after initial enrollment, has an equal opportunity for admission as mandated by statute.

In the event that the school is under-enrolled, CGMCS will continue outreach efforts to fill every possible seat.

Because such a limited geographic boundary has not been attempted before in Missouri, the planning committee reserves the right to approach Saint Louis University about expanding the recruitment area, if filling the classes becomes difficult.

Each year, preference will be given to returning students and to siblings of students already attending or accepted to the school and children of parents employed there. For definition purposes, “siblings” are two or more children that are related either by 1) birth, by means of the same father or mother, by 2) legal adoption, or 3) by foster care which is expected to be of long duration.

CGMCS shall not restrict admissions based upon the race, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship, disability, gender, income level, proficiency in English or athletic ability of the students or the parents or guardians; nor will students’ prior academic and behavioral records be considered.

School Health and Safety

Compliance with Health, Safety and Minimum Educational Standards Laws

CGMCS will provide a safe, protected, orderly instructional environment. The school shall report dropouts to the Missouri Literacy Hotline and comply with statutes and regulations regarding child abuse reporting. CGMCS shall comply with the laws and regulations of the state, county or city relating to health, safety, and state minimum educational standards, as specified by the State Board of Education, including the requirements relating to student discipline under sections 160.261, 167.161, 167.164, and 167.171, RSMo, notification of criminal conduct to law enforcement authorities under sections 167.115 to 167.117, RSMo, academic assessment under section 160.518, transmittal of school records under section 167.020, RSMo, and the minimum number of school days and hours required under section 160.041.

Student Health and Safety

All local, state and federal guidelines, codes and statutes relating to health will be adhered to at the school.

A CGMCS Health, Safety and Crisis Manual, specific to the school's building and circumstances, will be developed and available for review before the school opens. It will include policies pertaining to administration of medication, specific provisions for complying with statutes and regulations regarding infectious diseases, immunization of students and child abuse reporting. The manual will include emergency first aid procedures.

The Director will be charged with ensuring that an accident reporting system is developed and in place before the school opens and that said system is maintained.

A student health record system will be created and regularly updated to document individual student's health information, including immunizations. The record system will also be used to track students who are recipients of emergency first aid procedures. The school health record system will contain emergency medical information for all students and staff.

Cumulative health and immunization records and emergency medical information shall be maintained and continually updated. The school will develop and share with parents and students a policy regarding the administration of medications. CGMCS shall comply with all statutes and regulations regarding infectious diseases and immunizations. The school shall also establish procedures for providing first aid and medical care and reports of students served.

Facilities

Any facility in which CGMCS is housed will be compliant with all local, state and federal codes, regulations and statutes with regard to health, safety, security and ADA requirements.

In selecting a site for the early years of CGMCS, the objectives have been to provide a safe, comfortable learning environment for children and to locate in an economically appropriate facility. Renovation of this site will provide a beautiful learning environment for the children while also adding stability to the community.

All local, state and federal guidelines, codes and statutes relating to health, fire, safety and ADA compliance will be adhered to in the renovation of the facility.

The Health, Safety and Crisis Manual mentioned above will outline site-specific plans to maintain safety and to ensure the safety of students and staff should a crisis arise. The manual will describe how staff members will be trained in the proper use of emergency devices and proper emergency procedures. It will be the Director's responsibility to ensure that emergency devices are in place and operational. It will also be the Director's responsibility to ensure all staff is trained in the proper use of all emergency devices.

Safety training will be an ongoing component of staff professional development and said manual will be an integral part of that training.

Once the school is open, the Director will be charged with ensuring that site-specific emergency procedures are in place and that appropriate emergency drills are conducted on a regular schedule.

The Director, faculty and staff will have the day-to-day responsibility of ensuring that the school is in compliance. Board members have the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the individuals they hire fulfill this critical obligation.

Once the school has been occupied, a regular schedule of inspections will be developed to ensure the safety of staff and students.

Student Services

Transportation

Because CGMCS will recruit from a small geographic area, transportation to and from the campus will be the responsibility of parents and/or volunteers. CGMCS recognizes that parents who transport their children to school tend to have more frequent contact with their children's teachers. CGMCS will ensure that the transportation requirements of special needs students are met.

There will be a secondary transportation plan in place to pick up children who have not arrived to school at the regularly-scheduled time. The system will be implemented by the school's Family Support Coordinator. If, after a telephone call to the child's home, he/she is determined to be well and able to attend that day, he/she will be brought to school by a staff member or qualified volunteer. This system will ensure high attendance rates for each child, thereby securing state attendance-based funding.

The faculty and FSC will work with families to the greatest extent possible to overcome any challenges regarding transportation, utilizing school resources, if needed, to assist families with transportation. The school will also encourage families to support one another and to work together to get their children to school.

Though at this time CGMCS is not planning to contract with a company to provide transportation services, the school acknowledges its eligibility to receive reimbursement from the state for transporting students who live a mile or more away from campus. The Board of Directors will evaluate the transportation plan on a regular basis.

Food Service

CGMCS will evaluate its options in regards to food services for the school. Initially, the school may ask parents to provide children with breakfast and a sack lunch each day,

with the understanding that simple food items should be kept on-hand at the school in order to supplement the nutritional needs of the students.

As the school grows, CGMCS may choose to contract with a private company to provide food service. The CGMCS Board of Directors will approve all contracts with food service providers, and the school leader will manage food service contracts on a daily basis. Should CGMCS offer food service, eligible students will be provided meals for free or at a reduced rate in accordance with federal and state nutritional guidelines. Employees of any independent food service provider who have direct and daily contact with CGMCS students must undergo an authorized criminal background and child abuse registry check.

Enrichment Activities

City Garden Montessori Charter School will strive to maintain a high level of community involvement through the incorporation of field trips to local cultural institutions and historical sites. Assemblies will be held when appropriate to enrich students' lives and enhance knowledge. Scout programs and Mentor programs will be encouraged. As the school matures, after-school development opportunities will be encouraged.

Academic Calendar and Daily Schedule

City Garden Montessori Charter School will follow a standard school calendar. The school year will consist of at least 174 days. Holidays will consist of: Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day along with the Friday after, a winter break that will include Christmas Day and New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, Spring Break in March or April for five days, and Memorial Day. Two parent-teacher conference days per year will also be scheduled, during which students will not attend school. A detailed academic calendar for the first year of operation can be found in the Appendix.

To promote the educational growth and professional development of the faculty, there will be nine (9) Professional Development afternoons, held once a month. The students will have an early release day on those afternoons.

The total time spent each day at school will be seven hours. One-half hour of the day will allow for a lunch period. That will result in an instructional day of six and one-half hours. Faculty will be held accountable for a work day of eight hours, allowing for a 30-minute lunch break. A typical school day will start at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m.

The above calendar and daily schedule results in approximately 1,113 hours of instructional time, thus meeting the state-mandated 1,044 hours.

Uniform Policies

All CGMCS students are expected to wear a uniform on regular school days, except when otherwise notified by CGMCS teachers or administration. The uniform guidelines will be outlined in the CGMCS Family Handbook.

Attendance Policies

All students are expected to attend each day the school is in session. In case of illness, the parent/guardian must inform the school office that his/her child will be absent. Parents or guardians must submit written notice to the school office if extended sick days or leave days occur. A schedule to maintain current academic work in case of an extended absence will be provided by the teacher and should be maintained by the student. Cooperation between parent/guardian and school personnel is of the utmost importance. Every effort will be made to discourage extended vacation days during the normal school calendar so as not to disrupt the flow of learning. Also, due to the disruptive nature of late arrivals, all students are expected to be punctual.

Discipline Policies

A culture of acceptance and respect will be nurtured at CGMCS. The school will not tolerate any violent behavior towards others in the form of physical or verbal abuse. This school will be designated as a fight-free school and any fight disturbance will result in immediate disciplinary action. Disrespect for others will not be tolerated.

A student code of conduct will be included in the Family Handbook and available for Saint Louis University's review before the school opens. Copies will be distributed to both parents and students during recruiting sessions, open houses, and one-on-one consultations.

Prior to enrollment, a parent/guardian will be asked to sign a Discipline Policy Statement acknowledging the rights and responsibilities of the student, parent and school, and the receipt of the Family Handbook.

Personnel

Personnel and Qualifications

The Board of Directors is required to act upon the employment of persons recommended by the Director and faculty to fill professional staff positions required for proper classification and accreditation of the school, and to accomplish the school's goals and objectives.

Equal Employment Opportunity, District Employee rights, Noncertificated Personnel, Compliance with Certification Requirements

CGMCS will be an equal opportunity employer. It is the policy of CGMCS to seek and employ the best qualified personnel without regard to race, religion, color, creed, national origin, citizenship, age, sex, marital status, or disability. It is further this school's policy to ensure equal opportunity for the advancement of staff members and equal treatment in the areas of upgrading, training, promotion, transfer, layoff, and termination.

The school reserves the right to hire St. Louis Public Schools teachers. The district shall establish a uniform policy which provides that, if CGMCS offers to retain the services of an employee of the school district and the employee accepts a position at the charter school, an employee at the employee's option may remain an employee of the district and the charter school shall pay to the district the district's full costs of salary and benefits provided to the employee. The district's policy shall provide that any teacher who accepts a position at CGMCS and opts to remain an employee of the district retains such teacher's permanent teacher status and retains such teacher's seniority rights in the district for three years. The school district shall not be liable for any such employee's acts while an employee of the charter school.

CGMCS may employ noncertificated instructional personnel provided that no more than twenty percent of the full-time equivalent teacher positions at the school are filled by noncertificated personnel. All noncertificated instructional personnel shall be supervised by certificated instructional personnel.

CGMCS will comply with all teacher certification requirements as set forth by the State of Missouri. In addition, any full-time or part-time staff employed by the school to service children with disabilities will possess all certification requirements in accordance with state and federal law.

Background Checks, Instructional Staff Qualifications

The charter school shall ensure that all instructional employees have experience, training and skills appropriate to the instructional duties of the employee, and the charter school shall ensure that a criminal background check and child abuse registry check are conducted for each employee of the charter school prior to the hiring of the employee.

Criminal background checks will also be conducted for all board members and all volunteers who have contact with children at CGMS.

The charter school may not employ instructional personnel whose certificate of license to teach has been revoked or is currently suspended by the State Board of Education. Appropriate experience, training and skills of non-certificated instructional personnel shall be determined considering: 1) Teaching certificates issued by another state or states; 2) Certification by the National Standards Board; 3) College degrees in the appropriate field; 4) Evidence of technical training and competence when such is appropriate; 5) The level of supervision and coordination with certificated instructional staff and 6) Certification by a nationally recognized Montessori association.

School Employees

The Director

The Director of CGMCS, in conjunction with the Board of Directors, will be instrumental in making sure the school is operational by the Fall of 2008.

The Director will report to the Board of Directors and, along with the teachers, is responsible for the academic success of the school. The Director will be responsible for all day-to-day decision-making, financial transactions, record-keeping, testing and information requests.

The Director will:

- report to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on a monthly basis and the State of Missouri as required.
- oversee the curriculum and chair the Committee for Academics and School Operations.
- make recommendations with the faculty to the Board regarding hiring of teachers
- cultivate and manage professional development.
- create the master schedule, student schedules and teacher schedules.
- oversee student discipline issues that cannot be resolved at the classroom level.
- develop attendance policies and procedures.
- supervise and evaluate the Family Support Coordinator, the teaching faculty and other professional staff.
- evaluate and choose appropriate student assessments.
- hire and arrange for substitutes.
- develop community partnerships.
- delegate administrative work as appropriate.
- perform other duties as assigned by the Board of Directors.
- attend Board meetings and provide members with school updates on a regular basis.

City Garden Montessori Charter School

This position requires at minimum a bachelor's degree, extensive Montessori training and administrative experience.

Administrative Assistant

The school may employ an administrative assistant to support the Director in the administration of the school and to undertake such specified tasks and responsibilities as the Director and the Board see fit. This individual should have the ability and experience to serve as interim Director, in collaboration with CGMCS' senior teachers, if the need arises.

This position requires at minimum a bachelor's degree, significant administrative experience and a high degree of flexibility and attentiveness to detail. The administrative assistant must have the ability to perform without supervision and work collaboratively with others.

Teachers

Teachers work under the immediate supervision of the Director and carry out the duties customarily performed by teachers.

The teachers' primary duty is successful instruction of pupils. Teachers shall be responsible for creatively implementing Montessori curricula in their area(s) of expertise. Although the teachers are permitted considerable latitude in determining the activities and materials to be used in accomplishing instructional objectives, the content, materials and activities must be consistent with school objectives. In addition to classroom duties (creating lesson plans, administering tests, assessing student progress, etc.), teachers will maintain a productive classroom environment and organize Customized Learning Plans for their students. Teachers must also assume additional duties as assigned by the Director, including but not limited to attendance at staff meetings and parent conferences, supervision of students outside the classroom and participation in curriculum planning and staff development.

Teachers must have the ability to work as a team with an assistant instructor, para-professional or Family Support Coordinator.

Preferred candidates will hold at minimum a bachelor's degree, valid Missouri teaching certificate, and Montessori training.

Para-professionals and Part-time Teachers

CGMCS reserves the right to employ teachers on a part-time basis as well as para-professionals who will assist classroom teachers. Their roles and the number of work hours per week will be clearly stated to comply with the requirement that 80% of the teaching faculty be Missouri-certified educators.

Special Education Teacher

The Board will, in its discretion, either obtain special education services by independent contract with an outside provider, or employ a special education teacher as part of the professional staff. In either case, the special education teacher will report to the Director. The special education teacher may work with children one-on-one and in small groups as needed.

A special education teacher shall possess valid Missouri certifications, Montessori and such other certifications as required by the Board or applicable state or federal law.

Family Support Coordinator

The Board will employ a Family Support Coordinator as part of the professional staff. He or she will report to the Director. He or she will be responsible for coordinating efforts for students with special needs, and for addressing the physical, social and emotional needs of children and their families. The Family Support Coordinator may also assist with student assessments and student test preparation. He/She may provide lessons on special topics, lead small group sessions for children with special needs, and provide individual counseling and associated family social services or case management. The Family Support Coordinator will assist with developing discipline policies. Implementing attendance policies and procedures to encourage high attendance will also be the responsibility of this individual.

The preferred candidate will hold a minimum of a Master of Social Work degree or a Master's Degree in Counseling.

Receptionist

As CGMCS grows, we anticipate the need for a receptionist. Until finances permit, the duties outlined below will be shared by the administrative assistant and volunteers. Volunteers will receive an orientation describing duties and the importance of confidentiality. They will not handle student records or other confidential documents.

The receptionist will report to the Director and/or administrative assistant. Duties will include answering the phone, calling parents or other responsible persons in case of an absent student or a student emergency, maintaining all student and school records necessary to the operation of the school, filing, typing and reception of visitors.

The receptionist must be computer literate, be able to handle money, be knowledgeable regarding standard office procedures and be skilled at communicating by phone.

This position requires a minimum of a high school diploma or equivalent.

Building Maintenance and Cleaning

Initially, CGMCS will rely primarily on volunteers, staff and students to perform the regular maintenance and cleaning tasks necessary to maintain a sanitary and safe building. For larger projects or needs, CGMCS will contract with a reliable and reputable company to perform the needed work.

As CGMCS grows, the school will likely hire a custodian who will be charged with keeping the interior of the building sanitary and safe. This individual, as all other employees, will undergo a criminal and child abuse background check.

CGMCS is committed to keeping entries to the building as safe as possible during inclement weather and removing hazards from the school grounds as needed.

Plan for Securing Personnel

Hiring

Excellent employees are essential to and the most important resource for conducting a quality education program. Consequently, the top priority of CGMCS is to select the most qualified teaching personnel and support staff possible within the parameters of salary limitations. Further, CGMCS is committed to conducting appropriate staff development activities and establishing policies and working conditions that will enable each staff member to make the fullest contribution to the school's programs and services.

City Garden Montessori Charter School will secure personnel by advertising and networking with the career placement centers at national Montessori associations and at Missouri's post-secondary teacher training institutions. CGMCS will also post job openings on Missouri REAP, a job-finding and job-posting service for educators. Candidates will be invited to provide application materials and resumes. Because of the team approach utilized at CGMCS and its emphasis on educational outcomes, the Director and faculty will be charged with determining the method for screening and interviewing applicants. The Director and faculty will then forward their selections to CGMCS Board of Directors, which shall have the ultimate authority to determine employment.

Hiring and retention goals include the following:

- To recruit and attract the best-qualified personnel available,
- To provide compensation and benefit programs sufficient to employ and retain well-qualified faculty and staff members,
- To provide in-service training for employees,
- To conduct employee evaluations that recognize strong performance and foster improvement,
- To assign personnel so they are utilized as effectively as possible and
- To develop and maintain personal and working relationships that maximize staff performance and satisfaction.

All faculty and staff at CGMCS will have a criminal background check to be conducted by both the local police department and the FBI, and a child abuse registry check.

Salaries and Wages

See the attached budget for information on projected salaries and wages. Personnel costs are a significant portion of CGMCS' budget, because we believe that one key to our school's success will be to offer students adequate teacher supervision, attention and interaction.

Professional Development Plan

City Garden Montessori Charter School requires staff members to engage in activities for professional growth throughout their careers in order to maintain high qualifications for their positions.

Since City Garden Montessori Charter School's philosophy is based on the Montessori education method, all teachers will be expected to be well-versed in this philosophy and able to implement appropriate strategies in the classroom.

City Garden Montessori Charter School will foster a team approach among its teachers, encouraging them to understand their own strengths in Montessori education. Thus, teachers can be more effective in the classroom, utilizing their strengths, while also developing those talents that are weaker.

At City Garden Montessori Charter School, the Director will set the tone and develop the conditions under which staff members become the keepers of the school's culture and values. As a result, staff development will support the school's mission and basic values by fostering a positive school culture, sharing the best instructional practices, and encouraging individual teacher growth.

Sponsor Support of Professional Development

Saint Louis University promotes and encourages the professional development of all CGMCS staff. Saint Louis University invites faculty from CGMCS to participate in courses offered at the University that will enhance staff members' personal growth as well as the development of the school. Saint Louis University and CGMCS will work together to develop more customized professional development programming offered by the University, and will pursue the possibility of subsidized or reduced tuition for CGMCS faculty.

Individual Professional Development

In order to promote the individual development of each faculty member, every teacher will have an Individual Professional Development Plan, which will be developed in concert with and approved by the Director of the school. Individual Professional

Development Plans will capitalize on each teacher's particular strengths and help them to develop in areas where they may need more training or experience.

The Director will observe each teacher in the classroom at least twice per year; each teacher will also have an annual evaluation that will include self-reflection, a review by the Director, peer input and parent feedback. Individual Professional Development Plans will reflect strengths and challenges that are recognized during the annual evaluation.

Individual Professional Development Plan activities might include:

- Participation in university coursework and pursuit of advanced degrees;
- Participation in workshops, conferences or other educational programs;
- Subscriptions to professional literature and
- Membership and active participation in professional organizations.

Salaries will be structured in a way that recognizes continual training and personal growth.

Professional development activities should be coordinated with the Director and have prior approval when time away from the job and reimbursement of expenses are required.

Whole-School Professional Development

Before the start of each school year, teachers will participate in on-site staff development during which the Director will ensure that teachers fully understand and support the school's mission, goals, and basic values, emphasizing a rigorous Montessori program. This orientation will involve specific activities designed to align the staff and foster teamwork, such as visiting other Montessori schools and workshops on topics such as relating the Montessori curriculum to assessment tools, Response to Intervention, and sessions to coordinate school curricula across disciplines.

During the school year, staff development will continue through monthly professional development afternoons, weekly team meetings, peer observations, and mini evaluations by instructional leaders. Teachers will be encouraged to observe each other and other excellent teachers in the community, and will receive regular feedback on their performance, goals, and growth. Teachers will consistently exchange best practices with each other and teachers at similar schools. Staff development will involve not only structured whole staff and small group practices, but will be individualized to best serve each teacher's needs.

The professional development program for teachers will require high collaboration between all teachers. The basic philosophy of the program is based on constructive feedback, sharing of best practices between teachers and visiting both Montessori schools and other high performing schools.

Specific Professional Development Strategies

A. *Weekly*

Weekly Team Meetings - During weekly team meetings, staff members will have the opportunity to share best practices and to reflect on the needs of children, plan curriculum, fine-tune children's Customized Learning Plans and implement what has been learned from observation and assessment. For instance, if a teacher is struggling with lesson pacing he or she will be able to share and hear from other staff members about effective strategies.

B. *Monthly*

- **Reflection Meetings**- Teachers and appropriate staff members will participate in monthly reflection meetings to discuss effectiveness of teaching strategies, share best practices, and provide critical feedback to peers on strategies and methods of instruction, both successful and unsuccessful. During reflection meetings, the Director will also introduce various articles on education theory and practice to encourage discussion and constant learning.
- **Staff Meetings** – During staff meetings, staff members will coordinate special events, discuss new policies and procedures and share educational successes and concerns.
- **Outside Staff Developers** – Where appropriate, professionals from outside City Garden's network will be retained to provide value-added professional development opportunities for staff and the Director.

C. *Annually*

- **School Observations**- During the year, teachers will visit other schools that have found success in particular areas of school programming and development.
- **Intensive Summer Training** – Before the start of each school year, staff will participate in an intensive training program to enhance and coordinate the delivery of educational services.
- **Individual Training** – Teachers will create and review with the Director his or her Individual Professional Development Plan so that all elements of the school-wide Professional Development Plan can be integrated with a particular teacher's strengths and weaknesses. As staff members attend seminars, conferences or other professional development trainings, they will be encouraged to share information learned with the rest of the staff.

Personnel Policies

Handbook

Personnel policies, along with additional information, will be included in the Employee Handbook. The Employee Handbook will be distributed to new employees upon hire, with a signed acknowledgement of its acceptance by the employee to be kept with his or

her employee records. Any additions, deletions or other changes to the Employee Handbook are subject to approval by the Board of Directors. A copy of the policies to be included in the Employee Handbook can be found in the Appendix.

Public School Retirement

Personnel employed by CGMCS shall participate in the retirement system of the school district in which the charter school is located, subject to the same terms, conditions, requirements and other provisions applicable to personnel employed by the school district. For purposes of participating in the retirement system, the charter school shall be considered to be a public school within the school district, and personnel employed by the charter school shall be public school employees. In the event of a lapse of the school district's corporate organization as described in subsections 1 and 4 of section 162.081, RSMo, personnel employed by the charter school shall continue to participate in the retirement system and shall do so on the same terms, conditions, requirements and other provisions as they participated prior to the lapse.

Finance

Long-term viability, financial sustainability and academic success are of utmost importance to the Board of Directors, the School Director and supporters of CGMCS. Building on 13 years of successful operation of a Montessori preschool program, we believe that we are well-suited to establish and operate an elementary school that will see excellent academic results and become a long-lasting educational option for families in the City of St. Louis. In the areas where we need to develop leadership and expertise, we will seek consultation and professional development to hone our skills as leaders of an educational institution.

Having served approximately 22 students per year, City Garden has operated on a very small budget (less than \$80,000) for 13 years, without accruing any debt and, in fact, acquiring assets equal to approximately \$90,000. We are aware that we will be managing a significantly larger budget and serving a much larger population of students and families. However, we intend to plan our budget carefully, track our expenditures meticulously and make appropriate plans to meet our financial needs as we grow into a fully-functioning K-6th grade elementary school.

Objective: CGMCS will be a financially viable, fiscally-prudent, public institution.

Strategies: In order to operate as a financially viable, fiscally prudent and sustainable public institution, CGMCS will:

1. Maintain a balanced budget.
2. Submit a financial audit to Saint Louis University and to the State of Missouri each year by December 31st.
3. Remain current on all financial obligations.
4. Establish guidelines for Board approval for non-budgeted expenditures over \$1000.
5. Maintain a target 5-10% fund balance.
6. Under the leadership of the Finance Committee of the Board, implement an annual fundraising plan for programs and events outside of general operating expenses.
7. Have a dedicated position on the Board of Directors for a CPA or other similarly-qualified financial expert.

Assessment Strategies:

The Board of Directors and our Sponsor will work with the Director to ensure that these strategies are implemented.

Financial Accountability

MFAM, Annual Audit, Liability Insurance, MOPERM, Surety Bond

CGMCS shall be financially accountable. CGMCS shall use practices consistent with the Missouri Financial Accounting Manual, provide for an annual audit by a certified public accountant, publish audit reports and annual financial reports as provided in chapter 165, RSMo, provided that the annual financial report may be published on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Internet web site in addition to other publishing requirements,

As a charter school with local educational agency (LEA) status, CGMCS shall meet the requirements mandated by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for audits of such agencies. For purposes of an audit by petition under section 29.230, RSMo, the charter school shall be treated as a political subdivision on the same terms and conditions as the school district in which it is located.

CGMCS shall provide liability insurance to indemnify the school, board, staff and teachers against tort claims. For the purposes of securing such insurance, the charter school shall be eligible for the Missouri public entity risk management fund pursuant to section 537.700, RSMo. CGMCS will obtain competitive quotes from other insurers and compare these to the risk management fund in determining its choice of liability insurer.

The chief financial officer of CGMCS shall maintain a surety bond in an amount determined by the Board and Saint Louis University to be adequate based on the cash flow of the school.

Calculation and Distribution of State Aid, Reporting Requirements, Attendance, LEA Status

The charter school shall report the average daily attendance data, eligible free and reduced lunch count, special education pupil count, and limited English proficiency pupil count to the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. CGMCS shall promptly notify the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the pupil's school district when a student discontinues enrollment.

As a local educational agency (LEA), CGMCS shall receive from the department of elementary and secondary education an annual amount equal to the product of the charter school's weighted average daily attendance and the state adequacy target, multiplied by the dollar value modifier for the district, plus local tax revenues per weighted average daily attendance from the incidental and teachers funds in excess of the performance levy as defined in section 163.011, RSMo, plus all other state aid attributable to such pupils. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall reduce the payment made to the school district by the amount specified above and pay directly to CGMCS the annual amount reduced from the school district's payment.

Three-Year Financial Plan

An annual budget for the first three years of City Garden Montessori Charter School's operation is attached. CGMCS's annual fiscal period will run from July 1 through June

30. The Board of Directors, under obligation according to the by-laws, must approve the annual budget by June 30 of each fiscal year. Financial reports will be made at all CGMCS Board of Directors meetings. As required by statute and as mentioned previously, CGMCS agrees to use accounting practices consistent with the Missouri Financial Accounting Manual (MFAM) upon approval of the charter. For the sake of expediency and discussion, the attached budget does not follow the MFAM guidelines.

A daily attendance rate of 92% is included in the estimated revenue projections. All estimated revenue projections are based on information obtained directly from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. At this time we have not determined if CGMCS will need to offer an *extended year program*. We reserve the right to do so if it will enhance the mission and success of the school, and if funds are available for such a program.

Sponsor Fees

The expenses associated with sponsorship of CGMCS shall be defrayed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education retaining one and five-tenths percent of the amount of state and local funding allocated to the charter school, not to exceed one hundred twenty-five thousand dollars, adjusted for inflation. Such amount shall not be withheld when the sponsor is a school district or the State Board of Education. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall remit the retained funds to the school's sponsor, provided the sponsor remains in good standing by fulfilling its sponsorship obligations under sections 160.400 to 160.420 and 167.349, RSMo.

Contracted Services, Eligibility for Categorical Aid, Debt, Dissolution, Eminent Domain, Grants, Gifts and Donations

CGMCS acknowledges its right to contract with the local school board, community partnerships, state agencies or any other entity for services. As a public institution, the charter school shall not charge tuition, but may charge reasonable fees in keeping with similar institutions.

CGMCS acknowledges its eligibility for state transportation aid as well as its proportionate share of state and federal resources generated by students with disabilities or staff serving them. The proportionate share of money generated under other federal or state categorical aid programs shall be directed to such CGMCS students eligible for that aid.

CGMCS is authorized to incur debt in anticipation of receipt of funds. The charter school may also borrow to finance facilities and other capital items. The local school district may incur bonded indebtedness or take other measures to provide for physical facilities and other capital items for CGMCS if it sponsors or contracts with the school. The charter school must include a repayment plan in its financial plan if it incurs debt.

City Garden Montessori Charter School

In the event of the dissolution of CGMCS, any liabilities of the corporation will be satisfied through the procedures of chapter 355, RSMo.

CGMCS shall not have the power to acquire property by eminent domain.

The governing body of CGMCS is authorized to accept grants, gifts or donations of any kind and to expend or use such grants, gifts or donations. A grant, gift or donation may not be accepted by the governing body if it is subject to any condition contrary to law applicable to the charter school or other public schools, or contrary to the terms of the charter.

Insurance

City Garden Montessori Charter School acknowledges its eligibility for the Missouri Public Entity Risk Management Fund. The school will obtain competitive quotes from other insurers and compare these to the risk management fund in determining its choice of liability insurer. The school will ensure that said insurance policy includes adequate coverage for field trips, special events, errors and omissions for the Board of Directors and employees, and liability for the employees and the school. The policy will be similar in nature to that of conventional public schools and will include all necessary components to protect students, employees and the school. Once the charter is approved and the insurance provider is chosen, a copy of said policy shall be provided to Saint Louis University.

Payroll

CGMCS may choose to contract with a private vendor for full payroll services: withholding taxes and other benefit expenses from paychecks, filing the relevant returns with taxing authorities, and producing end-of-year income tax forms for employees.

City Garden Montessori Charter School will set its own policies and procedures for recording employee work hours, and dealing with issues of overtime, absences, leaves, vacation and other adjustments.

Charter Specifics

Term of Charter

The term of the City Garden Montessori Charter School's charter shall be ten years with the understanding that the charter may be renewed at the end of that period with approval of Saint Louis University. In the final year of the initial term, City Garden will approach Saint Louis University, or another eligible sponsor, to authorize renewal. Saint Louis University must advise the school of its decision whether or not to renew the charter no later than November 1st of the final school year of the initial term.

Amending the Charter

The charter may be amended by mutual agreement between the Board of Directors and Saint Louis University. All amendments shall be submitted in writing thirty days in advance and shall be posted at City Garden for viewing and comment during that same time period. At the end of the thirty days, signatures from a designated representative of the Board and a representative of Saint Louis University shall authorize the amendment, which will then be included with the original charter and noted as an amendment by date and title.

If Saint Louis University rejects a proposed amendment, Saint Louis University shall supply the school with a written statement outlining the reasons for rejecting the proposal. It will then be incumbent upon the school to determine if it will resubmit the original amendment with further explanation, submit a new amendment reflecting the joint concerns of the Sponsor and the school, or choose not to pursue the amendment any further. Any resubmission by the school recognizes the necessity for a new thirty-day review period.

Probation and Revocation

Saint Louis University may place the charter school on probationary status to allow the implementation of a remedial plan, which may require a change of methodology, a change in leadership, or both, after which, if such plan is unsuccessful, the charter may be revoked.

The charter may be revoked by Saint Louis University at any time if the charter school commits a serious breach of one or more provisions of the charter or on any of the following grounds: failure to meet academic performance standards as set forth in the charter, failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management, failure to provide information necessary to confirm compliance with all provisions of the charter and sections 160.400 to 160.420 and 167.349, RSMo, within forty-five days following receipt of written notice requesting such information, or violation of law.

At least sixty days before acting to revoke the charter, Saint Louis University shall notify the governing board of the charter school of the proposed action in writing. The notice shall specifically state the grounds for the proposed action. Within two weeks of receiving the notice, the Board may send written request for a hearing before Saint Louis University. Saint Louis University is then required to hold a public hearing within thirty days of the receipt of the request. Finally, Saint Louis University must submit its final decision to City Garden Montessori Charter School in writing within thirty days of the hearing. All revocation notices and correspondence between City Garden Montessori Charter School and Saint Louis University shall be by certified mail.

Saint Louis University shall establish procedures to conduct the administrative hearing that afford City Garden Montessori Charter School a full, fair and impartial hearing. These include the right to present evidence and witnesses to rebut the allegations in the notice of revocation, and the right to confront and cross examine any witness Saint Louis University believes has knowledge relevant to the issues raised. At the end of the hearing, Saint Louis University shall issue written findings of fact and conclusions and may order the proposed revocation be denied, or that City Garden Montessori Charter School be placed on probationary status, or that the proposed revocation be granted. The order of probationary status shall contain a detailed remedial plan by which City Garden Montessori Charter School may successfully emerge from the probationary period, as set forth in statute.

Pursuant to the Missouri Charter School Act, any final decision of Saint Louis University may be appealed by City Garden Montessori Charter School as set forth in Chapter 536, RSMo. and any other applicable state law. Termination of this charter shall be effective only at the end of the school year unless Saint Louis University determines that the continued operation of the charter presents a clear and immediate threat to the health and safety of the children enrolled at the school, or unless the Board of Directors and Saint Louis University mutually agree to terminate the operations of the school on a different date.

Affiliation

CGMCS has not chosen a post-secondary institution to affiliate with at this time, but reserves the right to do so in the future.

End notes

¹ Aaron North, Missouri Charter Public Schools Association, personal communication, 2007.

² Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, “School Data and Statistics,” <http://www.dese.mo.gov/schooldata/> (accessed July 30, 2007).

³ St. Louis Public Schools, “Annual Report,” 2006, accessed from their website

⁴ St. Louis Department of Planning, personal communication, 2007.

⁵ Marzano, Robert J, *What Works in Schools: Translating Research Into Action* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2003).

⁶ Lillard, Angeline S, *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p.29.

⁷ Gardner, Howard, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

⁸ Dreikurs, Rudolf, *Children: The Challenge* (Penguin Books, originally published 1964, reissued with Vicki Soltz , 1991)